



CAPITOL REPORT

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By Matt Puckett, Deputy Executive Director
LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 16, 2009

66 PROBATION OFFICERS LOSE JOBS GOVERNOR CRIST HAS 14 DAYS TO SIGN BUDGET

The Legislature wrapped up its emergency Special Session to reduce operating expenses for the current budget year on Thursday. Although every agency received a share of the pain, Correctional Probation Officers were once again hit the hardest followed by reductions to vacant positions in the Florida Highway Patrol. Governor Charlie Crist has received the budget and has roughly two weeks to veto anything he desires. Florida PBA President John Rivera and Executive Director David Murrell have both called on the governor to veto the \$ 7.1 million to community corrections, because probation officers are to be part of the lay offs. Well, before Governor Crist got a chance to exercise his veto pen 66 probationary status Correctional Probation Officers were shown the door. Secretary Walter McNeil and the PBA have been in contact about the positions since Monday, but currently there is not an agreement as to how the reductions should be handled.

Our position is crystal clear: Any and all cuts should be to upper echelon management and administrators. The reductions to these administrators should go deep enough to restore every one of the 66 officers laid off on Thursday and prevent any further lay offs to officers doing actual supervision of offenders. Our position is consistent with the Legislature’s intent, which is actually printed in the first paragraph of the reductions to the Department of Corrections.

Excerpt from the budget: “It is the intent of the Legislature that priority shall be placed on preserving positions in correctional institutions and community corrections.”

If we can not reach an agreement with the Department on the reductions, then the governor should VETO the \$7.1 million reduction.

These are obviously extraordinarily difficult economic times and Governor Crist, leaders like Senator Victor Crist and Representative Sandy Adams of the Florida Legislature, and Secretary McNeil have a task before them that none of us would want to undertake. Each of them has shown a passion for public safety and our experiences with them over the years has proven that they do truly care about the officers doing the job. The decisions made over the next two weeks are going to have lasting effects on Florida, its public safety employees and its citizens. This cut to community corrections is a defining moment for all parties involved and that includes the Florida PBA. We understand that this is a process, a frustrating one, but we hope in the end they will do what is best for the officers and the public. We urge both Secretary McNeil and Governor Crist to spare the position cuts to probation officers.

PBA MEETS WITH SPEAKER-DESIGNATE, REPRESENTATIVE DEAN CANNON



Representative Dean Cannon (left), PBA Executive Director David Murrell (center), and PBA Deputy Executive Director Matt Puckett (right) discussing special session reductions and PBA's regular session legislative agenda.

Congratulations to Representative Dean Cannon. He was selected by his peers to be the next Speaker of the House of Representatives (2011 and 2012). We had the pleasure to meet with him this past Tuesday, and we are proud to say he will be a strong advocate for our issues in the coming years. Representative Cannon is an engaging individual with a relaxed manner and a keen intellect. He quickly grasped our issues related to staffing levels, pay parity, benefits enhancements and equity in discipline. We look forward to working with him over the next four years.

Representative Dean Cannon:

Representative Cannon is currently serving as Chairman of the Finance & Tax Council and is also a member of the Policy Council, the Government Accountability Act Council, Rules & Calendar Council, Joint Legislative Budget Commission, and Office of Reapportionment. He is an attorney from Winter Park Florida, University of Florida Law School graduate, and he is married with three children.

One Question from this Week:

- How bad is Florida's economy going to get?

PBA LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR 2009

- Equitable pay increases for state correctional, correctional probation, and law enforcement officers represented by Florida PBA, including but not limited to, pay compression and retention issues (TBA and **Representative Julio Robaina**).
- Legislation extending the period of DROP participation for Law Enforcement, Correctional and Correctional Probation Officers an additional 36 months (**Senator Carey Baker** and **Representative Will Snyder**).
- Legislation clarifying the types of evidence, such as video surveillance, an officer who is the subject of a complaint can view prior to an investigation (**Senator Mike Fasano – SB 624** and TBA).
- Legislation changing the Special Risk upgraded credit from two percent to three percent (TBA and **Representative Carl Domino**).
- Support for changes and clarifications to investment guidelines contained in Chapter 185 (**Senator Carey Baker – SB 538** and **Representative Ed Hooper – HB 5**).

With reference to other legislation, the Board of Directors gives authorization to the Director of Legislative Services to support legislation favorable to the membership or oppose legislation harmful to the membership.
